

# WSET-TV LOCALISM INITIATIVES

## Local News

- (1) The News Department at WSET-TV is the largest department in the station. As such, it also has the largest budget and receives the most capital. Our investments in News are varied and broad.

- For staffing we have 38 people in News.
- We cover four newsrooms throughout the DMA.
- We staff for news seven days a week.
- We broadcast 17 hours of live news each week.
- We have three microwave live trucks.
- We have one digital satellite live truck.
- We have 11 Beta cameras in use for covering news.
- We have 16 news vehicles to cover news in the DMA.
- We have a new Weather Central system to forecast.
- We have 47 cell phones for covering news.

In addition, we cover news around the state of Virginia as necessary. We also cover news outside of Virginia for our viewers, e.g., covering troops stationed in Cuba at Guantanamo Bay and covering the decision in Florida to move Virginia Tech into the ACC.

We provide extensive coverage of NASCAR in our region including in North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee. We provide sports coverage in surrounding states for our audience (West Virginia, Washington, D.C., Maryland, and North Carolina).

- (2) WSET-TV airs four local newscasts Monday through Friday (three hours daily) and two local newscasts on Saturday and Sunday (one hour daily). These local newscasts total 17 hours per week. Monday through Friday, 12% of daily programming is devoted to local news. On the weekends, 4% of daily programming is devoted to local news.
- (3) WSET-TV's website, [www.wset.com](http://www.wset.com), is used to enhance local news coverage. It is more than just the online version of ABC 13 News. While this site provides the news, weather, sports, and general information that other television sites provide, it also provides a content-rich, interactive, visitor-friendly website that engages the visitor, having them return numerous times for information. It also allows us to provide more information about stories and news events that could not be a part of the on-air story because of time constraints.

The site uses the latest cutting-edge, multimedia-rich content, providing visitors the opportunity to learn more about a topic or news story, add their personal thoughts on stories, provide feedback directly to any department in the station, and post a community event or classified ad.

Fostering a sense of community with our individual story message boards, visitors become members of wset.com and sign up to receive our daily electronic newslink, breaking news alerts, daily weather forecasts, and breaking severe weather information. These alerts are customized and sent to both emails and handheld devices such as cell phones and PDA's. Tens of thousands of these are sent out each month.

"Your Choice News" is a daily feature that runs for 90 minutes each evening to allow news viewers and website visitors to choose a story that will air in our 11:00 p.m. newscast. This is in addition to news polls that are posted on the site when topics of great public interest are in the news.

We have received numerous positive comments from visitors who utilize the site several times a day to make their lives easier and better, but none have been more rewarding than those we have received from many area residents called up for service in the Guard and Reserve. They tell us that they are keeping up with their local news while in various parts of the world serving our country.

## **Local Public Affairs**

- (1) Good Morning Virginia is WSET-TV's morning news/community focus program that airs from 5:30-7:00 a.m. on Monday through Friday. This program combines news coverage, weather, and local interest stories using taped segments, live interviews with members of the community, and live in-studio features profiling local issues.

One of the features exclusive to Good Morning Virginia is the Community Calendar segment. This spot highlights community events in the viewing area that people may be interested in attending. Examples are:

- "Hard Day's Night" Beatles tribute band performed at fundraiser for Rustburg High School Band Boosters.
- Pancake Jamboree in which celebrity cooks made pancakes for the community to benefit the Lynchburg Exchange Club. Held at the local City Armory.

Good Morning Virginia also regularly features live interviews with members of the community, usually concerning upcoming events in the area. Some of the events covered include:

- Interview with Public Relations Coordinator for local children's museum, Amazement Square, about their upcoming events.
- Interview with local physician whose practice was participating in Kids' Day America. This is a special day observed by chiropractic offices worldwide. This physician offered dental, vision, and spinal screenings for children.

Segments aired during Good Morning Virginia, but not exclusive to that show, include:

- Crimestoppers: Details of crimes in the community with telephone number that allows viewers to anonymously report tips to law enforcement.
- Manhunt: Profiles of wanted criminals in the community. Produced with local law enforcement in an effort to generate leads.
- Safety Zone: Produced with local law enforcement. Officers are interviewed live regarding tips to help keep the community and its residents safer.
- Gary's Garden Tips: Local garden shop owner gives tips to viewers about gardening in this area and the special concerns in growing plants in the region.

(2) Regularly scheduled segments on local public affairs included in local newscasts include:

- The Heart of Virginia segment. This airs weekly, ranging in length from 1:30 to 3:00. Interesting people and stories from the viewing area are profiled, e.g., Hospice of the Hills delivering Christmas cookies to patients having less than six months to live and helping their caretakers to have time away from their duties.
- Good News Friday. This is a weekly feature, ranging in length from 1:30 to 3:00. It spotlights "good news" stories from the local area, positive impacts on the community, and community involvement, e.g., the Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging delivers 450 hot meals, three days a week, to seniors needing a supplement to their diet. They are currently serving 1,500 clients.
- Crimestoppers. This is a weekly segment, ranging in length from 1:30 to 3:00 produced in conjunction with local law enforcement to generate leads in criminal cases. This segment details local open cases, e.g., a man armed with a gun robbed local gas station.
- Manhunt. This is a weekly segment, ranging in length from 1:30 to 3:00. Manhunt differs from Crimestoppers in that this feature is used to "profile" wanted criminals when the suspect has already been identified, but is still at large, e.g., local man wanted for dealing in large amounts of cocaine was profiled. The arrest rate for those featured averages well above 70%.

## **Creating or Selecting Programming**

- (1) In addition to having an open door policy and accepting and reviewing emailed suggestions, WSET-TV uses "Survey of Community Needs and Interests" forms to solicit input from people on the items they feel are concerns in their communities to aid us in addressing those concerns in our programming. We have placed the forms and return envelopes in the lobby of our main office and in our three bureau offices. The survey form is also available on our website. Each month, a mailing list is compiled and surveys are sent to a particular group, e.g., health care organizations, banks and credit unions, law enforcement officials. In addition, staff members are encouraged to distribute the forms at the following opportunities: when giving speeches in the community, talking to community groups, speaking at high schools and colleges, interviewing program guests, distributing business cards at various functions, conducting visits to the station by adult groups, and attending meetings of community groups and organizations. Input received is compiled into a monthly report distributed to the management team and news staff.
- (2) Following are examples of WSET-TV preempting network programming in order to air other programming of more interest to our local community: Muscular Dystrophy Association (September) and Children's Miracle Network (May/June) telethons are aired annually, Miss Virginia Pageant is aired annually (June), a UVA football game aired in September 2003, and St. Jude's Children's Hospital specials aired in January and March 2003 and in January 2004. WSET-TV preempted an episode of ABC's "Once and Again" in March 2002 due to controversial subject matter.

## **Emergency Programming**

- (1) Below are examples of live and/or on-the-scene coverage of emergencies, etc.:
  - September 22, 2004 - Propane leak on busy highway, Route 29. Both sides of highway closed, airport evacuated, clean-up took most of the day. We cut-in to network programming throughout the day to keep viewers informed and to let parents know that children would be late in being released from school due to the leak.
  - September 17, 2004 - Tornado touchdown in Henry County. We did extensive live coverage throughout the day, interrupting regular programming.
  - August/September 2004 – We covered the remnants of two hurricanes that came through central Virginia. We stayed on the air nonstop for several hours.

- May 6, 2004 - Military F-15E jet crashes in Franklin County. Live coverage interrupted regular programming.
  - Winter 2003/2004 – We provided extended coverage during the winter storm season including live shots in Lynchburg, Danville, and Roanoke.
  - December 9, 2003 - Central Virginia and surrounding areas experienced an earthquake. Numerous viewers called in worried about aftershocks, etc. We had extensive live coverage from our Weather Center, interrupting regular programming.
  - Summer 2003 – We covered a hurricane on location in North Carolina.
- (2) WSET-TV recently purchased a new Weather Central system for forecasting. Our investment was approximately \$100,000. The system provides the most up-to-date equipment for accurate forecasting available. We also purchased a digital satellite truck within the past two years. We own three microwave trucks for live ENG reporting. We also own eleven beta cameras for newsgathering.
- (3) WSET-TV participates in Amber alerts and provided some coverage of both local events and a national event in the past 12 months.
- (4) WSET-TV is an EAS Participating National (PN) member station. As such, we monitor radio stations WSLQ, the Local Primary (LP) for Roanoke, and WRVL, the Local Primary (LP) for Lynchburg, and rebroadcast that information to the public. This system includes information that is vital to the safety of the community at large. During natural and man made disasters the information is used to advise people to evacuate local areas to preserve and save lives. Included as automatic responses are Administrative Messages, Civil Emergency Messages, Hurricane Warnings, Immediate Evacuations, National Information Center Messages, and National Test and Tornado Warnings. The latest use of this system has been the Amber Alert. The notice goes out to the public to help find missing and abducted children.

The EAS information is augmented by our staff of meteorologists who monitor specific local dangers and broadcast them as needed in an effort to keep our viewers informed of all emergency situations.

## **Political Programming**

- (1) For several years, WSET-TV has offered free access to candidates via a series of “mini-debates” titled “Where Do You Stand?” Candidates for local and statewide office have been invited to come into the studio and tape replies to various questions. These “Where Do You Stand” mini-debates feature a question followed by a taped reply by opponents in each race.

In 2004, these two-minute mini-debates aired on October 18-22 and October 25-29 following our news programs at approximately 6:56 a.m., 12:26 p.m., 6:28 p.m. and 11:31 p.m. The text is also made available on our website. Participants in 2004 were Glenn Ayers and Chuck Neudorfer, Bedford Board of Supervisors District 2; Tony Ware II and Steve Arrington, Bedford Board of Supervisors District 5; Laura Rodes and Keith Jones, Bedford County School Board District 5; Rick Boucher, Seth Davis, and Kevin Tripplett, House of Representatives District 9; and Virgil Goode and Al Weed, House of Representatives District 5. Issues included social security, minimum wage, school uniforms, bringing new business to the area, hunting laws, gun rights, health care, Standards of Learning testing, tourism, and county taxes.

In 2004, everyone we contacted eventually participated. We did have to go to several candidates and tape them on location, breaking from our policy of candidates coming to the studio so they all could be taped with a similar setting.

- (2) To analyze ballot or candidate issues outside of the “Where Do You Stand?” segments that focus on candidates, we did a number of candidate issue stories as items surfaced. We talked to both sides on a specific issue and aired it as a reader, a VO/SOT, or a package. Concerning ballot issues, we did several pieces leading up to the election on the two statewide ballot issues providing background and information on what they meant.
- (3) We covered local campaign events and the campaigning of candidates. We covered debates, probably three or more this year. We covered press conferences on both sides. We did not cover any political conventions this year (Democratic or Republican) since Virginia had little play in the conventions.

## **Civic, Cultural and Other Community-Responsive Programming**

- (1) Coverage of local events includes:
  - Clothes for Kids program. Lynchburg. Members of the community anonymously sponsor a child in order to provide school clothes for them.
  - Monument Terrace dedication. Lynchburg. We did a live newscast from this event. The Terrace is a local memorial dedicated to all local veterans from every war. It was recently refurbished after almost 80 years.

- Commonwealth Games. Area-wide. Local competition in Olympic-style games. In addition to news coverage, we also did a one-hour special.
- Bedford Centerfest. Bedford. Local town festival featuring music, food, and activities. We did a live newscast from this event. Proceeds benefited the Timbrook Library and Park.
- Hispanic Heritage Festival. Lynchburg. First annual event celebrating Hispanic culture.
- Hip-Hop Summit. Lynchburg. Event seeking to reconcile hip-hop culture with the local community, bringing out the positive aspects. We provided news coverage and our 11:00 p.m. Anchor, Donna Harris, emceed the event.
- Theatreworks Grand Opening. Lynchburg. Local drama and theatre organization that offers classes to children and adults.
- Garlic Festival. Amherst County. Hugely popular local festival featuring the many foods, wines, etc. made from garlic.
- Virginia State Police Open House. Pittsylvania County. Opening of new State Police headquarters in this area.
- Virginia Ten Miler. Lynchburg. Large internationally renowned road race. Attended by thousands of runners and many times that amount of spectators.

(2) PSA's of local groups or addressing local issues:

- E. C. Glass High School Theatre. High school drama class presents plays for the community. Average 2 spots per week.
- Junior Achievement. Local group promotes educational opportunities for children. Average 4 spots per week.
- Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame. Business Hall of Fame honors men and women who have made outstanding contributions to free enterprise and to the community. Average 9 spots per week.
- Ellington Fridays. Ellington Fellowship Playhouse organization's goal is to identify, cultivate and expose artistic talent in our community. Average 4 spots per week.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters' Bowl for Kids. Mentoring organization fundraiser. We provided coverage and a WSET-TV team participated in the bowling. Average 24 spots per week.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates, CASA, of Central Virginia. CASA trains and supervises community volunteers to serve as appointed advocates for abused and neglected children in the juvenile court. Average 4 spots per week.
- Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce - Discover Lynchburg. Local Chamber's PSA to bring attention to the resources of the area and encourage resident participation in community events. Average 6 spots per week.

- Lynchburg Hillcats' Family Night. Local minor league baseball team. The spots encourage family night out at the ballfield. Average 5 spots per week.
- American Heart Walk. American Heart Association's major fundraising walk in the local area. We air PSA's and also have a WSET-TV team participate in the Walk. Average 10 spots per week.
- Virginia Health Quality Center. The Center assists health care professionals and consumers in improving the way care is delivered and the outcomes of that care. Their PSA informs viewers about the Home Health Care agency companion website. Average 4 spots per week.
- Movie and a Meal Blood Drive. American Red Cross local event to help replenish the local blood supply to hospitals. Average 22 spots per week.
- Academy of Fine Arts. Local arts organization that promotes both performing and fine arts in the community. Their various PSA's are aired throughout the year. Average 4 spots per week.
- Campbell County Rescue Squad. Emergency response organization. Their PSA seeks volunteers to help staff the Squad. Average 4 spots per week.

(3) Coverage of important issues affecting the local community:

- Crimestoppers and Manhunt features. Profile local crimes and wanted criminals with the aid of local law enforcement.
- Bedford Landfill Leakage. Bedford. Old landfill leaking possibly toxic chemicals into the groundwater of a local neighborhood.
- CERT, Citizens' Emergency Response Team, training. Danville. Emergency response training for those interested in being able to help emergency services personnel when needed.
- Safety Zone. Local law enforcement personnel regularly talk about various issues affecting the safety of the general public and help viewers to understand how they can protect themselves.
- Health Check. Weekly feature that spotlights news in the health care and wellness fields.
- Speed Zapper. Our news team, along with local law enforcement, monitors speeding in residential neighborhoods. Viewers could call in a request for their neighborhood to be monitored.
- Blue Ridge Thunder. Nationally recognized investigation team in Bedford County that focuses on Internet predators and children.



## **Station Participation in Community Activities**

### **(1) Support of non-profit and charity initiatives:**

- Children's Miracle Network and Muscular Dystrophy Association. We participate in their telethons each year by providing technical assistance, equipment, and talent appearances. The telethons are aired on WSET-TV and preempt regular programming.
- American Cancer Society Relay for Life. WSET-TV covers these walking fundraisers each year in several different locations throughout the viewing area. Often live shots are included in our coverage.
- Red Cross Movie and a Meal program. The local Red Cross chapter and WSET-TV partner to encourage blood donation by coverage of this event. These drives are normally held at local malls with live news coverage and news talent appearances included.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters' Bowl for Kids. In addition to news coverage, WSET-TV normally has a station team participate in this event. Proceeds support Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring program. Our Senior Anchor, Noreen Turyn, is also on the board of this organization.
- American Heart Association's Heart Walk. Walking fundraiser for the Association received news coverage, spot inventory, and usually a station team participates. Programming Director, Dot Ballagh, is on the board of this organization.

### **(2) Promotion of causes not tied to a particular organization:**

- Steeplechase at Oak Ridge Estate. Inaugural steeplechase event at Oak Ridge Estate to benefit the Jubilee Family Development Center. We provided web announcement, spot inventory, commercial production, and news coverage.
- Military Appreciation Night. Held by Golden Corral restaurants in the viewing area. Free dinner for veterans. We normally have live shots, talent appearances, and web announcements.
- Native American Festival. Sponsored by the Virginia Museum of Natural History to promote the museum and educate viewers on Indian culture. We provided news coverage.
- Leadership Lynchburg. Held by Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce. This program offers citizens the opportunities to build leadership skills so that they may graduate into active leadership roles within the community. We provided spot inventory, commercial production, and news coverage.
- New Land Jobs' Annual Art Auction. This organization helps with pre-employment training and job search assistance for unemployed or underemployed individuals. We provided web announcements and news coverage.

(3) Education initiatives:

- Bedford County's "Operation Pack-a-Bag." This was Bedford County's initiative to have community members fill a backpack full of school supplies for needy children. We provided web announcement and news coverage.
- J. Crew's "Pack the Bus" program. Four school buses were parked in four different school districts with the idea of packing them with school supplies. We provided live shots, web announcement, and news coverage.
- Clothes for Kids. Sponsored by the local mall, Coca-Cola, and the Salvation Army. This initiative helped provide children with clothing for school by having residents choose a child's name anonymously and donate clothing for them. We provided live shots, talent appearances, news coverage, and web announcements.
- The ABC 13/Community First Bank Stock Market Challenge was designed to help educate students in WSET-TV's viewing area about the different types of investments and the risks involved in each type. There were 14 high school teams participating in the first round (September-December 2003) and 7 high school teams in the second round (February-April 2004) and, in addition, there was a team of experts chosen by the bank and a team from WSET-TV's morning program "Good Morning Virginia" in each round. Each team's investments were evaluated weekly and updated on "Good Morning Virginia" and updates were available on WSET-TV's website. Each school's Stock Market Challenge team started with \$100,000 to invest in the Stock Market Game program administered by the Virginia Council on Economic Education, which simulates real investor training. There was no real cash involved. After the final evaluation, an overall winning school was announced based on the total money earned between the two games. George Washington High School was the winning school and will receive a party for the entire school from the bank.
- WSET-TV staff members participate in educational events and make presentations about their careers on an ongoing basis. The following are a few examples of the many activities in which they participated: Rhonda Cantrell, Sales & Marketing Coordinator, taught class at Dearington Elementary School under the Junior Achievement program (five days); Noreen Turyn, Senior Anchor/Reporter, read two books to third grade class at Concord Elementary School for American Education Week and spoke at a DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) graduation at Rustburg Elementary School; Donna Harris, Anchor/Reporter, participated in Career Day at Sandusky Middle School by discussing careers in journalism; and Sean Sublette, Morning Meteorologist, spoke with two classes of fourth graders at

Paul Munro Elementary School and did an experiment demonstrating atmospheric pressure.

- WSET-TV hosts visits to our studio by various community and school/college groups on a regular basis. The groups that visit are educated about the station by one or more WSET-TV staff members and observe a live newscast for purposes such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts earning merit badges, part of their participation in summer/camp mentoring program, as a supplement to their classroom instruction, or to learn about meteorology.

We covered important issues such as:

- September 14, 2004 - The Danville Public School system's search for a new Superintendent after the current official resigned early. Teachers within the system were not happy with his leadership style.
- Continuing coverage of the area's Standards of Learning test scores is presented as stories arise, e.g., on July 23, 2004 we had a report on the Virginia Board of Education's decision not to include some middle schools' SOL scores towards state accreditation.
- April 15, 2004 - Dr. Patty Hale, a professor at Lynchburg College, was awarded the National Professor of the Year award for 2003. We did a special "Heart of Virginia" feature on her community work and educational creativity.
- January 22, 2004 - The Lynchburg School Board acknowledged a \$3.5-million deficit. Superintendent James McCormick discussed with our news team how the shortfall arose and how it will affect the school system.

- (4) Website promotion of community service/involvement. We provide free website announcements to non-profit organizations for their events. Some examples include:

- CASA Training in Lynchburg. Provides those interested with the tools needed to advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the court system.
- Citizens Against Family Violence in Martinsville. Planning the first Take Back the Night rally for Martinsville and Henry County. These events, which are nationally recognized, are held to address the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault in the community.
- Open meeting of Legacy Museum of African-American History's Collection Committee at the Community Room of the Public Library. The purpose of the open meeting was to prepare for upcoming exhibits on segregation and the civil rights movement. African-American and white residents who experienced racial segregation and the changes brought about by the civil rights movement in Lynchburg or the

counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Campbell were encouraged to participate.